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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6003
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 HARARE 002515

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SUBJECT: "RED GUARDS" AND SQUATTERS: MUGABE'S
CAMPAIGN SHOCK TROOPS

REF: HARARE 2461

CLASSIFIED BY DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION EARL M. IRVING FOR
REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D).

SUMMARY

11. (C) THE MEANING OF DEMOCRACY IS BEING VITIATED IN ZIMBABWE. IN ORDER TO WIN THE PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION, THE DATE OF WHICH IS STILL NOT FIXED, PRESIDENT MUGABE HAS UNLEASHED A CAMPAIGN OF TERROR IN THE COUNTRYSIDE, COMPARABLE IN PURPOSE TO CHINA'S CULTURAL REVOLUTION. HIS TRUSTED AGENTS ARE THE "WAR VETERANS," MISFITS WHO MISSED THE BOAT ON THE BENEFITS OF ZANU-PF'S ASCENT TO POWER IN 1980, WHO WE PREDICT WILL REMAIN ON THE FARMS UNTIL AFTER THE ELECTION AT THE VERY LEAST TO SETTLE SCORES WITH OPPOSITION SUPPORTERS. MUGABE HAS FORCED WHITE COMMERCIAL FARMERS (WHOSE WEALTH, AND NOT RACIAL PREJUDICE, HAS BROUGHT THEM INTO THE RULING PARTY'S SIGHTS -- A TRIUMPH OF GREED) TO NEGOTIATE WITH THE WAR VETS, THUS GRANTING THE VETS SOME DEGREE OF LEGITIMACY. THIS STEP ENSURES THAT THEY WILL RETAIN A SEAT AT ALL FUTURE DISCUSSIONS ON LAND REFORM. IN THE RURAL AREAS WAR VETERANS AND YOUNG ZANU-PF THUGS ARE CONDUCTING MAO-STYLE POLITICAL "RE-EDUCATION" CAMPS TO FORCE FARMERS

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AND THEIR WORKERS TO RECENT AND VOTE FOR THE RULING PARTY. IN THE CITIES WE EXPECT ZANU-PF TO INUNDATE THE POLLING PLACES WITH PERI-URBAN SQUATTERS EAGER FOR A PETTY PAYOFF, DILUTING CHANCES OF AN OPPOSITION WIN IN THESE CONSTITUENCIES. THE OPPOSITION MOVEMENT FOR DEMOCRATIC CHANGE (MDC) HAS BEEN UNABLE TO COUNTERACT EFFECTIVELY THE RULING PARTY'S VIOLENCE AND TACTICS, BEING NEARLY FORCED TO GO AND ACT UNDERGROUND. THE SHEER BRUTALITY OF THE CAMPAIGN, EXPECTED TO INTENSIFY AS ELECTION DAY APPROACHES, COUPLED WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S CONTINUED INATTENTION TO THE ECONOMY, WILL HAVE NEGATIVE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE REGION THAT SHOULD BE DISCUSSED DURING SOUTH AFRICAN PRESIDENT MBEKI'S STATE VISIT TO WASHINGTON. END SUMMARY.

RECENT AND CONVERT...OR ELSE

12. (C) ALTHOUGH ZIMBABWE IS SCHEDULED TO HOLD A PARLIAMENTARY ELECTION WITHIN THE NEXT TWO MONTHS OR SO

(WE HAVE HEARD JUNE 17 AND JULY 11 AS POSSIBLE DATES),
WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE RUN-UP TO THEM HARDLY FALLS
UNDER THE RUBRIC OF DEMOCRACY, EVEN MAKING ALLOWANCES
FOR A YOUNG STATE IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD. FREEDOM OF
EXPRESSION AND ASSEMBLY ARE VIRTUALLY NON-EXISTENT. THE
POLICE COMMISSIONER HAS SAID HE WILL APPLY THE LAW AND
ORDER MAINTENANCE ACT TO PREVENT OPPOSITION PARTIES FROM
BUSING SUPPORTERS TO RALLIES. A BOMB EXPLODED IN FRONT
OF THE OFFICES OF AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER THAT SUPPORTS
THE OPPOSITION MDC. THE GOVERNMENT-INFLUENCED "THE
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HERALD" NEWSPAPER HAS BECOME A CESSPIT OF FACT-TWISTING
AND SCURRILOUS "JOURNALISM," NO LONGER MAKING ANY
PRETENSE OF PROFESSIONALISM OR NONPARTISAN COVERAGE OF
THE NEWS. IN THE COUNTRYSIDE "WAR VETERANS" OCCUPY
FARMS, BEAT, KILL AND DESTROY THE PROPERTY OF ANYONE
SUSPECTED OF EVEN THE REMOTEST SYMPATHY OR CONNECTION TO
THE OPPOSITION. ZANU-PF PARTY WORKERS, WIELDING WEAPONS
IN FRONT OF TOUGH CROWDS, ORDER COMMERCIAL FARMERS TO
TRANSPORT THEIR OWN FARM WORKERS TO RALLIES FOR
POLITICAL RE-EDUCATION. FARMS ARE NOT THE EXCLUSIVE
VENUE FOR BARBARITY. ON MAY 10 FOUR MDC MEMBERS
"DISAPPEARED" IN THE MATABELELAND TOWN OF LUPANE AND ARE
RUMORED TO BE HELD IN MATOPOS.

13. (C) IN ORDER TO SEE HIS PARTY RETAIN CONTROL OF
PARLIAMENT, MUGABE HAS TAKEN A PAGE FROM HIS IDOL, MAO
TSE-TUNG, AND LAUNCHED HIS CULTURAL REVOLUTION IN THE

SIPDIS
COUNTRYSIDE, TO BORROW THE ANALOGY OF A LOCAL
JOURNALIST. MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL LIBERATION WAR
VETERANS ASSOCIATION (NLWA) ARE OCCUPYING WHITE-OWNED
COMMERCIAL FARMS AND CONDUCTING A REIGN OF TERROR,
TARGETING "INTELLECTUALS," SUCH AS SCHOOLTEACHERS, FOR
PARTICULARLY HARSH TREATMENT AND PUNISHMENT. WE PREDICT
THEY WILL STAY ON THE FARMS UNTIL AFTER ELECTION DAY.
ONCE THE POLL RESULTS ARE IN THEY LIKELY WILL SINGLE OUT

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THOSE THEY THINK VOTED FOR THE MDC FOR RETRIBUTION,
BURNING THEIR DWELLINGS OR EVEN MURDERING THEM.

A BLUNT INSTRUMENT OF PERSUASION

14. (C) THE WAR VETERANS, SUPPORTED BY THE POLICE, SOME
PLAINCLOTHES MILITARY AND CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE
ORGANIZATION OFFICERS, ARE NOW MUGABE'S PROTEAN GUARD,
THE PEOPLE HE RELIES UPON, WITH OR WITHOUT THE ADDED
BENEFIT OF TRUST OF ITS LEADER, CHENJERAI "HITLER"

HUNZVI. THE PARTY AND EVEN THE SECURITY FORCES HAVE BECOME LESS RELIABLE, WITH MEMBERS OF BOTH OPPOSED TO MUGABE'S USE OF VIOLENCE AND INTIMIDATION AS BASIC CAMPAIGN TOOLS. THE STILL-DETERIORATING ECONOMY ALSO LENDS THEM NO SUCCOR. BUT THE LUMPEN, KNOW-NOTHING "WAR VETS," MANY BLATANTLY TOO YOUNG TO HAVE PARTICIPATED IN THE CHIMURENGA (WAR OF NATIONAL LIBERATION), ARE LOYAL IN A CANINE WAY AND ARE, IN OUR JUDGMENT, UNDER MUGABE'S FIRM DIRECTION THOUGH THE CONTROL FACTOR IS LESS CERTAIN.

15. (C) AT THE BEGINNING OF THE FARM OCCUPATION EXERCISE THE NLWVA SUFFERED FROM A PROBLEM: LACK OF LEGITIMACY. THOUGH EVERYONE UNDERSTOOD THAT THEIR LAWLESS BEHAVIOR WAS SANCTIONED BY THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE, THERE WAS NO
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PUBLIC DISCLOSURE OF THE NEW SYMBIOSIS. IN ORDER TO OVERCOME THE LEGITIMACY HURDLE AND TO BE SEEN AS A REASONABLE AND ENLIGHTENED LEADER, MUGABE AUTHORIZED THE WAR VETERANS TO NEGOTIATE DIRECTLY WITH THE COMMERCIAL FARMERS, AIDED BY THE MEDIATION EFFORTS OF FATHER FIDELIS MUKONORI, S.J., A MEMBER OF THE CLERGY TRUSTED BY MUGABE. THE FARMERS, DESPERATE FOR RELIEF FROM THE OCCUPATIONS AND WISHING TO REAP THEIR HARVEST, SAT DOWN, TALKED AND CONCEDED. IT'S HARD NOT TO DO SO WITH A GUN AT YOUR HEAD. THE WAR VETS, MEANWHILE, HAVE NOT FULFILLED THE TERMS OF THE AGREEMENT, PEACE FOR LAND, BUT NOW WILL HAVE A SEAT AT THE TABLE IN ANY FUTURE DISCUSSIONS ON LAND REFORMS. THEY HAVE PROVEN, AT A MINIMUM, TO BE PERFIDIOUS INTERLOCUTORS.

THE URBAN CENTERS ARE NOT FORGOTTEN

16. (C) THE RULING PARTY APPEARS TO HAVE ABANDONED COMPLETELY ITS ANTI-CORRUPTION STRATEGY, ONCE THOUGHT TO BE A STEP TO COURT THE URBAN VOTE AND EVEN INTERNATIONAL GOOD WILL. THE ATTORNEY GENERAL IS NEITHER TARGETING ANY OTHER SENIOR GOVERNMENT FIGURE FOR ARREST NOR EVEN GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS OF PUSHING FORWARD THE CASES OF THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN ARRESTED. INDEED, THE ZANU-PF POLITBURO, WITH THE COMPLICITY OF THE COURTS WHICH SUSPENDED ALL THEIR BAIL RESTRICTIONS, HAS ALLOWED FORMER MINISTER OF LANDS AND AGRICULTURE KUMBIRAI KANGAI TO RUN FOR AND WIN THE ZANU-PF PRIMARY ELECTION IN BUHERA SOUTH, A CRYSTAL-CLEAR SIGN THAT ALL IS FORGIVEN.
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WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE FORMER COMMANDER OF THE ARMY SOLOMON MUJURU APPROACHED PRESIDENT MUGABE AND ASKED HIM TO STOP PURGING PARTY ELEMENTS.

17. (C) FOR THE CITIES WIDESPREAD TERROR IS BAD BUSINESS, BUT THE RULING PARTY HAS NOT CONCEDED THESE CONSTITUENCIES ENTIRELY TO THE MDC. INSTEAD, IT APPEARS THAT ITS TACTIC WILL BE TO FLOOD THE POLLING PLACES ON ELECTION DAY WITH PERI-URBAN SQUATTERS, OF WHICH THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS, AND MEMBERS OF THE MILITARY (WHO, ALONG WITH DIPLOMATS, MAY CAST BALLOTS BY MAIL) TO VOTE FOR ZANU-PF. MAKING THIS POSSIBLE IS THE FACT THAT, AS THE OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR GENERAL INFORMED US MAY 10, ELECTION REGISTRATION CONTINUES, IN SPITE OF THE OSTENSIBLY OFFICIAL CLOSING DATE OF MARCH 31. TECHNICALLY THOSE WHO REGISTERED AFTER THE CLOSING DATE, WHEN THE ROLLS WERE TURNED OVER TO THE DELIMITATION COMMISSION, COULD VOTE BY BEING PLACED ON A SUPPLEMENTARY REGISTER.

18. (C) WE EXPECT THE INTIMIDATION CAMPAIGN IN THE RUN-UP TO THE ELECTION ONLY TO INTENSIFY. VIOLENCE FOLLOWING THE ELECTION REMAINS MORE THAN JUST A REAL POSSIBILITY. IN THE INCREASINGLY UNLIKELY EVENT THAT ZANU-PF DOES NOT TAKE AN OUTRIGHT MAJORITY, WE THINK THE

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RULING PARTY WILL NOT ACCEPT THE RESULT. IT WILL ACCUSE THE OPPOSITION OF RIGGING THE ELECTION, OF WAGING A CAMPAIGN OF INTIMIDATION, SUPPORTED BY THE OFFSHORE WHITE-RULED CABAL, AND MAY POSSIBLY ORDER THE JAILING OR ASSASSINATION OF MORGAN TSVANGIRAI -- IN SHORT, EVERYTHING IT HAS DONE AND IS DOING ITSELF. IT WOULD BE AT THIS POINT, OR AT LEAST SHORTLY THEREAFTER SO THE THUGS COULD GO WILDING AGAINST PERCEIVED MDC SUPPORTERS, THAT WE CAN SEE THE ARMY INTERVENING TO HALT THE CHAOS WITH THE ATTENDANT IMPOSITION OF A STATE OF EMERGENCY. WE RECEIVE FREQUENT REPORTS THAT THE MILITARY IS PART OF THE VIOLENCE CAMPAIGN IN THE FORM OF THE NOTORIOUS "FIFTH BRIGADE," WHICH COMMITTED ATROCITIES IN MATABELELAND AND MIDLANDS IN THE 1980S. THE MERE APPEARANCE OF ITS OFFICERS IN RED BERETS INCITES FEAR IN THE NDEBELE.

MDC HAVING HARD TIME COUNTERACTING VIOLENCE

19. (C) BY KEEPING TO THE MORAL HIGH GROUND, THE MDC APPEARS TO HAVE YIELDED STRATEGIC DOMINANCE TO ZANU-PF. THE MDC HAS BEEN HARD-PRESSED TO COUNTERACT THE WAVE OF VIOLENCE AND DEMONIZATION IN THE MEDIA, WHICH ARE ALMOST DRIVING IT TO CONDUCT ITS CAMPAIGN UNDERGROUND. SO FAR MDC LEADER TSVANGIRAI HAS ONLY BEEN ABLE TO SAY THAT HIS
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FORMER ROOST, THE ZIMBABWE COUNCIL OF TRADE UNIONS, MAY CALL FOR A GENERAL, NATIONWIDE STRIKE. RESPONDING TO UNEASE IN THE RANKS, THE MDC LEADERSHIP HAS FLOATED THE POSSIBILITY OF A GENERAL BOYCOTT OF THE ELECTIONS AS ONE OF SEVERAL POSSIBLE OPTIONS. MORGAN TSVANGIRAI IS SAID PERSONALLY TO OPPOSE IT BECAUSE A SIMILAR OPPOSITION STRATEGY BACKFIRED IN 1995. MOREOVER, BY DROPPING OUT OF THE RACE NOW THE MDC LEADERSHIP WOULD SIGNAL THAT SUPPORTERS WHO PERISHED IN THE POLITICAL VIOLENCE HAVE DONE SO IN VAIN. NEVERTHELESS, SUCH A MOVE WOULD PUT THE LIE TO ANY SEMBLANCE OF LEGITIMACY OR CLAIM OF PLURALISM, WHEN AND IF THE ELECTIONS ARE HELD.

THE REGIONAL IMPACT

10. (C) THE IMPACT THAT SUCH DIRE ACTIONS WILL HAVE ON THE REGION ARE SERIOUS. AT THAT STAGE ZIMBABWE'S ECONOMY WILL BE IN THE FIRST STAGES OF AN EFFECTIVE MELTDOWN, WITH CONSEQUENT REGIONAL NEGATIVE EFFECTS. VIRTUALLY ALL THE SADC MEMBER COUNTRIES WILL SEE THE STRENGTH OF THEIR COMMERCIAL CREDIT RATINGS UNDER THREAT. THE RAND WILL FACE AN EVEN MORE SERIOUS LOSS OF CONFIDENCE THAN THAT BEHIND ITS RECENT, NEARLY 20 PERCENT DROP VIS-A-VIS THE U.S. DOLLAR. HOW DEEP THE HOLE GETS IN ZIMBABWE IS AT THIS TIME ANYONE'S GUESS.

11. (C) NOW IS THE TIME TO CONTINUE OUR BEST EFFORTS TO ALTER THIS PROJECTED COURSE WHICH IS GATHERING MOMENTUM. U/S TALBOTT'S PUBLIC AND PRIVATE STATEMENTS DURING HIS
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VISIT TO THE REGION WERE VALUABLE. THE STATE VISIT TO WASHINGTON OF SOUTH AFRICAN PRESIDENT THABO MBEKI LATER THIS MONTH PRESENTS A RIPE OPPORTUNITY TO REVIEW THE BIDDING ON ZIMBABWE AND ELICIT GOOD AND MORE PRODUCTIVE ACTION FROM THE REGION'S ECONOMIC COLOSSUS.

MORE GREED THAN PREJUDICE

12. (C) FINALLY, A WORD ABOUT RACE RELATIONS. MOST ZIMBABWEANS HARBOR SOME DEGREE OF DISTRUST, PREJUDICE AGAINST OR EVEN FEAR OF WHITES, STEMMING FROM ZIMBABWE'S APARTHEID-LIKE PAST, BUT MUGABE'S CURRENT CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE MINORITY LIVING IN THE COUNTRYSIDE MUST NOT BE SEEN ONLY IN TERMS OF RACISM. WHITES LIVING IN THE CITY GO ABOUT THEIR BUSINESS UNHINDERED. RATHER, COMMERCIAL FARMERS ARE BEING TARGETED BECAUSE THEY POSSESS WEALTH AND THE COUNTRY IS IN DIRE ECONOMIC STRAITS, AND MANY HAVE BECOME INVOLVED IN OR SUPPORT OPPOSITION POLITICS, INCLUDING THE THREE WHO HAVE BEEN KILLED SINCE APRIL. AFTER TWENTY YEARS OF ENDURING POOR GOVERNANCE AND MISGUIDED ECONOMIC PROGRAMS, THE LOSERS OF THE REVOLUTION, MAINLY THE WAR VETERANS, SEE THAT NOW IS THEIR CHANCE TO GET THEIRS. PROOF THAT IT IS NOT

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STRICTLY AN ANTI-WHITE CAMPAIGN IS A LETTER FROM THE AFFIRMATIVE ACTION GROUP, AN OSTENSIBLE PRESSURE GROUP DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF ZIMBABWE'S BLACK BUSINESSMEN, NOW CIRCULATING AMONG THE INDIAN COMMUNITY. THE LETTER THREATENS OCCUPATION OF INDIAN-OWNED BUSINESSES AND PROPERTIES IF THEY DO NOT TURN THEM OVER TO INDIGENOUS BUSINESSMEN. GREED IS COLOR-BLIND.

IRVING

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